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The Christian News-Letter

Edited by
J. H. OLDHAM

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DEAR MEMBER,

We open our newspapers with a daily justified confidence that the news will be good. The British and American forces have brought to their enormous undertaking matching resources of armaments, skill and courage. It is not a moment too early to look ahead to tasks which lie over the near horizon. They will demand an equal, though different, expenditure of imagination and effort as, first in the West and then in the East, war gives place to reconstruction.

A NEW INDIA

The importance of India to any structure of world peace becomes more obvious as the war reveals her great material reserves, her growing industrial output and the quantity and quality of her man-power. Alone among the great countries of the East, India may emerge from the war with her soil unravaged by a ruthless enemy. Is India going to move forward to fill the place which seems to be marked out for her, or will the critical post-war years find her cheated by internal chaos of a great destiny?

The famine in Bengal and the facts about the food situation have made it clear that, in the words of Professor A. V. Hill, "India is living on the edge of a precipice. The factor of safety is so low that any disturbance, even a comparatively minor one, may send her over the edge." Her population is increasing, and has been for some time, by a million every two months; the area under food production has increased by about 1 per cent in twenty years, without any appreciable increase in output per acre. The majority of the population is worse fed than it was fifty years ago; famine on an even larger scale is inevitable unless drastic change takes place. India is as ill-prepared for her great destiny educationally as she is physically. Eighty-five per cent of her people are illiterate. Of those who go to school at all, 80 per cent leave before they are old enough to retain what they have learned, i.e. before they are twelve.

These facts and their implications are now dominating the thoughts of many whose concern is with India's future, and plans for vast reconstruction are being produced. A group of Bombay industrialists have put forward a fifteen-year plan for economic development;[1] some of them are coming to this country in the autumn for further consultation. The Radical Democratic Party has produced a "People's Plan."

[1] Published as a Penguin Special under the title of *A Plan of Economic Development for India*.

Professor A. V. Hill has visited India to discuss with scientists the development of India's natural resources and a concerted attack on malnutrition and disease. An agricultural programme designed to double India's output of food in fifteen years has been drawn up by the Advisory Board of the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research and is now before the provincial and central governments. The Government has already produced a scheme for universal compulsory education at a cost rising from 7½ to 200 million pounds a year, with a requirement of 1,800,000 teachers.[1]

The attainment of all these objectives in a country of 400 million people would be an achievement beside which that of Russia would seem small.

POLITICS AND NATIONAL PURPOSE

No British Government operating from Whitehall, no political party or group in India can carry such plans—or any others directed to the same ends—into effect. Such an achievement can come only from what Sir George Schuster described in the House of Commons as "a surge of national enthusiasm" which, he added, "can only be inspired by a truly national government." Are there among the political leaders in India to-day, or among those who may come into politics from the army or industry, any who will bid for the support not of one party alone, or one community alone, against other parties and other communities, but of all who want to see their country great, against the ruin which threatens to engulf her? If so, the future lies with them.

It is with some such hope of the emergence of a new unity that expectation is everywhere fixed upon the meeting of Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Jinnah. The Moslem League has given Mr. Jinnah full powers to act with Mr. Gandhi. With the leaders of the Congress Party still interned and not available for consultation, Mr. Gandhi speaks for no party. Yet for all the limitations, the chance to appeal beyond parties to the people comes first to these two men. We do not hope for a bargain, but for a challenge.

THE RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

Unity and freedom are indispensable to a surge of national enthusiasm. But behind these political issues are others far deeper. The pattern of Indian society in the day-to-day life, habits and thoughts of ordinary people and their relationship to each other in friendly community is set by religion.

The traditional official attitude of British Government and administration in India has been one of strict neutrality in religious matters. Where religious practices involved direct menace to life, as in *suttee* and child marriage, the Government has taken action. Time and again (and in the present as well as in the past) the Government has proved the truth of the words of Abbé Dubois, one of the early Jesuit missionaries to India, "Try to change a social institution and you meet an unconquerable people."

[1] *Post-war Educational Development in India* (The Sargent Report). Report by Central Advisory Board of Education. India Office, 1s.

All the new schemes proposed for India's future challenge the religious system of Hinduism at one point or another. Hinduism as it affects the vast majority of its adherents is not a series of philosophical abstractions. It is a legal system, a form of religious worship, and a social and economic system based on caste and held together by religious sanctions. There can be no fifteen-year plan of advance in agriculture without an abandonment of the Hindu family system of inheritance and the worship of the cow. Similarly there cannot be the twenty times as many midwives, seventy times as many health visitors, and a hundred times as many nurses, which the plans envisage, unless there is a widespread break with both the Moslem and the Hindu conception of the family. These things are the things that people live by, and speakers in the recent debate and elsewhere seem to think that Indians can fairly easily be persuaded by education to put away these things as childish *without putting anything in their place.*

The facts are quite other. Education merely as a mastery of the techniques of reading, writing and modern science has no such power. The old governing conceptions reassert themselves. I remember two young university graduates contracting cholera and dying by attempting to cure themselves with further draughts of holy water bought from a *sadhu* which had given them the disease. It is the grip on the heart and will of a new affection, a new purpose and a new governing conception, which makes possible a break with old customs and governing conceptions. Every great religion in India has had its reformers and servants of mankind. But it is from the Christian Church, a tiny minority in the total population, that any significant number of men, and more strikingly women, have come forward to serve the community as teachers and in the health services. The first women teachers, health visitors and nurses were Christians, and these professions, vital to the future of India, still draw a large proportion of their recruits from the Christian community. We cannot answer for Moslems and Hindus the question whether their cultures can and will undergo such change that modern reforms can be embodied within them. Our concern as Christians is that the particular and irreplaceable contribution of the Church, holding up to men the freedom of the Gospel, shall not fail for the lack of our prayers, our money and our service.

Yet we should be underestimating the importance of the political situation if we thought that the Church can by-pass politics and do its work undisturbed by this conflict. Doubts as to our intention of giving political freedom now that victory seems near are widespread ; they are reflected in the Church. We cannot afford to let slip any opportunity of expressing to the Indian people our people's determination that our pledges shall be implemented in full.

RELIEF WORK IN EUROPE

News of what is being done and planned by voluntary societies for relief work in Europe is of necessity scanty, since their activities depend upon a situation which is as yet unknown. The general plan of relief work is that liberated territory will at first be under military administra-

tion, and military personnel will be used for immediate relief work. Either the military authorities or the civil government when restored may invite the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration to assume responsibility for some or all of the relief services needed. Any one of these may call upon the help of voluntary organizations. UNRRA has vast material resources and considerable administrative personnel, mostly drawn from the civil service.

The voluntary societies in this country have formed the Council of British Societies for Relief Abroad.[1] This Council has received over 3,000 offers of service. Not all are suitable. Previous relief work or comparable social service experience, or special technical qualifications of various kinds, are desired, and age—at both ends of the scale—and health have to be considered. Suitable applicants are passed to member societies of the Council, who select volunteers and form them into relief teams or units. Many volunteers have pre-empted for service in particular countries whose needs cannot yet be gauged.

About 200 workers have already been sent under the auspices of UNRRA to the Middle East, where they are gaining practical experience in the camps for Greek and Yugoslav refugees. These are destined for relief work in Greece and other Balkan countries as soon as the way is open. Contingents of the British and American Red Cross are already at work in Italy.

The work that these organizations will do will vary with a continuously fluctuating situation. There will be pioneer work in rough conditions in partially devastated territories. This will include epidemic control and emergency health work of all sorts, the local distribution of food and clothing, welfare and occupational work in refugee camps, and assistance with information and advice services. A further stage will be the re-starting of local social services, and there may be specific tasks such as surveying the degree and extent of malnutrition.

Three thousand volunteers is a large number. They include some whose capacity and experience are of great worth to this country. To India, Africa or China their value would be beyond compute. The voluntary societies for relief in Europe act as auxiliaries to UNRRA, or to the military or civil administration. It is time we had ample assurance that these picked relief workers are going to be fully used in a boldly conceived and quickly executed plan.

Yours sincerely,

Kathleen Bliss

[1] COBSRA, 75 Victoria Street, S.W. 1.

EDUCATION AND THE SOCIAL ORDER

By MICHAEL CLARKE
(*Formerly Headmaster of Repton*)

The heart of the new Education Act is its seventh clause:

"The statutory system of public education shall be organized in three progressive stages to be known as primary education, secondary education, and further education; and it shall be the duty of the local education authority for every area, so far as their powers extend, to contribute towards the moral, mental and physical development of the community by securing that efficient education throughout those stages shall be available to meet the needs of the population of their area."

With a Ministry of Education created to replace the Board and to carry the principles of this clause into practice, the way is clear for advance on a broad front. The stress laid on the fulfilment of personality agrees with Christian ideas of spiritual freedom, and progress must be made without delay in improving primary schools to provide the sound foundation on which the various forms of secondary education may be built.

Important as this task is, it is not the only one, nor perhaps the most pressing. To concentrate effort on producing quantity to the detriment of quality is to begin at the end. Standards in education are established hardly and easily lost. In a period of reconstruction it is urgent that there should be secured for the most gifted children an education that will stimulate them to use their gifts creatively for the common good. Men and women knowledgeable, enlightened, fair minded and competent will be called for after the war in greater numbers than we are finding and training them at present. They will be wanted in the public administrative services and in the no less public service of management of industry, they will be wanted to work in the Churches, the universities, the hospitals and the schools. Demand is likely to exceed supply for many years.

This amounts to saying that for an indefinite period we shall need to devote special care to the education of a ruling class. In American social theory every citizen is held to be fit to hold political or administrative office—any can rule. It is not so held in England. Every man's opinion is given equal weight in the making of law, but administration is left to a class whose members have worked assiduously to qualify for the service of the State or as professional men and women. The class is not a closed one, it is constantly being recruited from the body of the community. Nor is the "ruling class" the repository of the mysterious quality of "leadership" about which it is now fashionable to talk. Different kinds of leaders are thrown up by different situations. The specialized knowledge, energy and initiative which a leader needs are to be found in all sorts of men as circumstances demand.

THE FLEMING REPORT AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Report of the Fleming Committee[1] recommends that the Public Schools shall be geared into the national system, so that those who would benefit by the education they provide shall not be debarred by parents' inability to pay the fees. It divides Public Schools into two classes, and proposes two schemes to achieve this purpose.

Scheme A applies to schools already associated with the State system by the admission of a proportion of pupils sent to them by Local Education Authorities from Primary Schools, and by the receipt of grants of money direct from the Board of Education. There are ninety-nine of these schools, many of them old Grammar Schools, and they are largely but not entirely day schools, some of them preserving strong local traditions. In these schools tuition fees are to be abolished or to be graded according to an income scale, local authorities in agreement with the Governors are to reserve a proportion of the places and to pay for them, and the central authority is to pay the fees or part of the fees of the other pupils.

Scheme B applies to eighty-nine schools hitherto wholly independent, both in government and source of income. At least a quarter of the places available in these schools are to be filled by pupils who have been two years at a Primary School of the state system. The fees, both tuition and boarding, will be met by state bursaries. The bursars are to be selected by regional interviewing boards on which Local Authorities, heads of Primary Schools and heads of Boarding Schools will be represented, and written examination is excluded from the test.

The Committee preface their recommendations with four chapters on the history of the Public Schools, recognizing their position and character as largely derived from historic circumstance. While the schools share an atmosphere derived from a common origin and the tradition of association with one another in maintaining standards and discussing common problems, it must be remembered that in size, importance and prestige they vary between extremes. They range from the most famous in the kingdom to some giving an education not appreciably different in cost or kind from that of many aided and maintained schools.

This variety makes generalizations about the Public Schools difficult, but it is fair to say that tradition, custom and association foster in them a profound sense of community. The new-comer enters with a sense of awe, which develops into the delights of membership and mellows into affectionate devotion. The spirit which animates and supports these feelings is common to all the Public Schools, having at many points in their history been transmitted by a headmaster or headmistress who has caught the inspiration at one school and communicated it to another. One of the clearest vocations to the Public Schools is to pass this spirit on to the newer foundations.

There is nothing exotic about this spirit at its best. It influences homes and is reinforced there when children return for holidays. It is akin to their religion, with which it is often bound up, and its possession enriches them when they leave school more than scholarly attainments

[1] *The Public Schools and the General Educational System.* H.M. Stationery Office. Price 1s. 6d.

or physique or manner or even friendship, though all these are expressions of it. It underlies a pattern of living learned within the walls of a school, extensively through meeting situations rather than intensively through conscious teaching. It is the unique discovery of English education and should not be the monopoly of a class but the common heritage of all.

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

In the hundred years since England was observed to be divided into two nations, the old fissures have deepened and new ones have appeared. The Report asserts with convincing argument that the Public Schools were not responsible for the original social division, but it admits that the advantage of a superior education has served to emphasize and harden class distinction. This process of hardening was modified in the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the present by constant recruitment of new arrivals to the privileged class, as fresh fortunes were made and more boarding schools attained front rank.

By the end of the last war the creative period of the Public Schools had passed. With the exception of Sanderson of Oundle there are few names in the early years of this century to compare with the score of famous innovators and reformers of the past. Self-complacency could be observed in high places and in the schools from which the occupants of high places still mostly came. The generation of men who returned to the universities from war service in 1919 assumed that when the time came for them to choose careers there would be competition to obtain their services. Nor were they disappointed. In nothing have conditions changed so much. The boy at a public school to-day is aware of unemployment as a calamity threatening him in a way it never did his father. That has pricked the bubble of self-complacency and disposed friends of Public Schools to reform. The war too has taught many lessons and broken down conventional barriers.

The Fleming Committee itself was set up two years ago at the request of the Governing Bodies Association and the Headmasters' Conference. Evidence has been taken from a long list of witnesses, including many governors and schoolmasters, and the members of the Committee have unanimously agreed to its conclusions. The Public Schools then are morally committed to the policy recommended in the Report.

THE WIDER IMPLICATIONS OF THE REPORT

To share the heritage of the Public School more widely is a large aim. Is it practicable, and does the Report show the way to achieve it? Critics have quickly pointed out that the admission of a few thousand bursars a year will have little significance quantitatively. That is true—the first bursars will be pioneers. There is no reason to fear they will not be of the right type for the adventure. Techniques of selection have been improved in recent years by experiment and observation, and the interviewing boards will have the guidance of school records and parents' wishes. The boys and girls they select will

not only stand to gain by their opportunities, they will bring fresh points of view and new vigour to the communities they join. There is no need to fear for them that the life will be strange at first, school life is strange to all children at the outset. They will be at no disadvantage compared with many others who enter the old way. They will presumably be keen to go, and will find more in common with the eager among the normal entrants than these find with the timid or the spoilt among their fellows.

That the bursars will prove susceptible to the atmosphere they meet is certain. Doubters suggest that it will fade away when school is left and they face the realities of the business world. Of course they will then be shocked by the absence of community. But the English have a genius for group fellowship, the lack of which to-day is a symptom of our social disease. The more young men and women are convinced that life is impoverished by the loss, the sooner it will reappear. There is no space to show that it is the antidote to the evils inherent in central planning. "To love the small platoon," in Burke's phrase, is the first stage in developing broader loyalties. As the benefits of the little bridge between the systems begin to appear the local education authorities may seize the opportunity to build their own boarding schools to accommodate a larger number.

The Public Schools have agreed to contribute to the realization of the principle of education for all according to capacity. They have made a general contract. They must agree upon details and these must be approved by Parliament. Parliament and the schools respond in different ways to public opinion, but both respond. The nation is therefore faced by the necessity of a moral decision. Will it accept the offer of the Public Schools and make them an instrument for closing the breach in society and creating a new aristocracy of service independent of wealth and acknowledging that privilege begets responsibility ?

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